Wildlife Diversity News

A Publication of the Iowa DNR Wildlife Diversity Program

Volume 13, Issue 2

Spring 2014

News From the Frog Pond

I (Karen) was asked a question a few weeks ago – "Why does the DNR work with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation so often on land acquisition?" Well, the short, simple answer is Government Agencies are slower than slow, whereas most private individuals would like to move faster. When an individual decides they'd like to sell their property to an organization like the DNR (or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the land the private individual has worked so hard to enhance, they usually want to finish the transaction in a timely manner – a matter of months, not years. State government, however, has very prolonged procedures that must be followed in order to purchase land – and when that purchase involves using at least some of the funds from the federal government, those procedures take even longer as there are additional approvals that must be received from outside of Iowa. For the DNR, getting all of the proper paperwork, appraisals, funding, and approvals lined up can take a year or longer. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation can move faster on those projects simply because they are not a government agency.

So, often what happens is an individual will decide they want to sell, and sell NOW. They are proud of their land and want to share their achievements with others instead of risking a sale to an individual who may or may not have the same opinion of how the land should be utilized. They do not want to hear "we will add you to the list and get back to you next year." Instead, they often work with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. INHF and the landowner will discuss the history of the property, the improvements the landowner has made, and often INHF will buy the property. A year or more later, Iowa DNR or a County Conservation Board or the US Fish and Wildlife Service will purchase the land from INHF.

Sometimes, though, the landowner does not want to sell, but instead wants assistance with improving their land for wildlife (or other natural resource based reasons). Iowa DNR has a Private Lands program that can help with that. Our staff will talk with the landowner about what types of improvements they would like to do – add a prairie or wetland, thin some trees to restore a savanna, for example, and assist with finding federal or state cost-share monies to help offset some of the expenses. All of the actions mentioned above are determined by the wishes of the private landowner, not a government agency. So if you hear someone say that their neighbor's land had been 'condemned and put into CRP' (the Conservation Reserve Program which restores grassland), please realize that the land was not 'condemned', his neighbor CHOSE to enroll the land in the CRP program.

- Karen Kinkead, WDP Coordinator & Todd Bishop, Wildlife Bureau Special Projects Coordinator

Inside this issue:

Edited by Julia Dale

Diversity Dispatch

Breaking News in the Wide World of Wildlife

Hawaiian Nene Goose Returns to Historic Breeding Grounds


Photo: USFWS

For the first time in nearly 300 years, the state bird of Hawaii, the Nene, has nested on Oahu. Hunting and introduced species nearly drove this unique goose to extinction, and only 30 Nenes existed by 1952. Due to captive breeding efforts in England and elsewhere, the bird was reintroduced and the wild population is now estimated at 2,500 individuals. As the state bird of Hawaii, the rare goose has long been a symbol of pride for island communities.

The female Nene laid four eggs in February, three of which hatched in March. All the goslings seem to be doing well, and are expected to fly to Kauai, which has a larger Nene population.

http://www.cbsnews.com/news/after-300-years-hawaiian-nene-spotted-on-island-of-oahu/

Researchers Call for Non-Lethal Sampling of Sensitive Species


Cricket Frog
WDP File Photo

Biologists at Arizona State University have suggested alternatives to the standard practice of collecting samples of newly discovered or re-discovered species. Instead of collecting a voucher specimen, field biologists could use non-lethal techniques such as high-resolution photography, audio recording, and DNA sampling to confirm the presence of species that are either new to science or had previously been thought to be extinct. The researchers pointed out that many of the species most frequently collected have small populations and are often concentrated in one or a few geographical locations. In these cases, over-collection by scientists or hobbyists could pose a serious threat to the species as a whole.

https://asunews.asu.edu/20140417-endangered-species-research

New App to Aid Conservation of Gopher Tortoise


Photo: USFWS

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission officials have announced the creation of a new smartphone app that enables users to upload photos and locations of the threatened Gopher Tortoise. The species is difficult to study because a single individual may use multiple burrows, and biologists hope that the new technology will allow them to make a more accurate estimate of real population size. Among the biggest threats to the tortoise are habitat loss, nest predation, and collisions with cars.

http://www.wuft.org/news/2014/04/08/florida-aims-to-protect-gopher-tortoises-with-app/

Guinea Officials Ban Bushmeat in Attempt to Slow Spread of Ebola

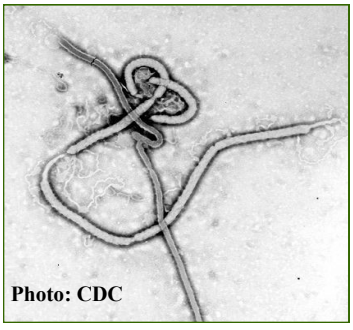


Photo: CDC

People in West Africa traditionally eat a wide variety of wild game, known locally as bushmeat. During the current outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus, the countries of Guinea and Liberia have collectively reported well over 100 deaths. The virus, which is harbored by forest animals including bats, can spread to humans from the meat of infected animals. The government of Guinea has enacted and is enforcing a ban on bushmeat in the country to help address the problem.

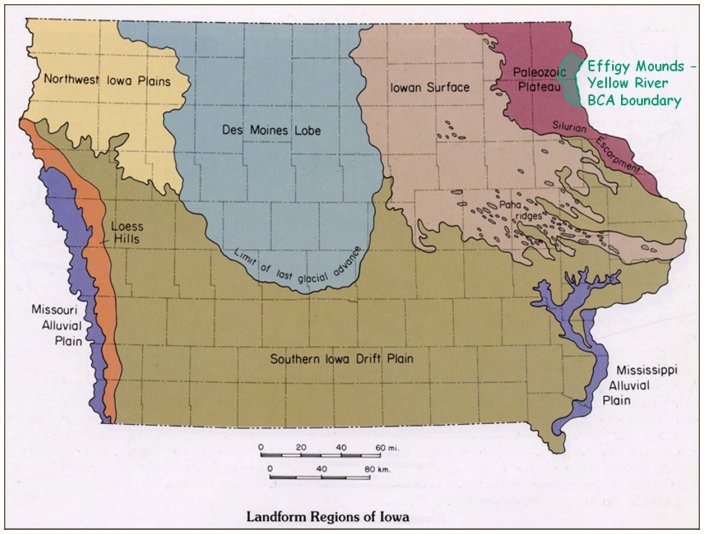
http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/27/health-ebola-bushmeat-idUSL5N0MO2NF20140327

Globally Important Bird Area Dedication Set for May

One of Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas (BCA's) has recently received a special designation from the National Audubon Society as a Globally Important Bird Area. The Effigy Mounds– Yellow River Forest Bird Conservation Area includes valuable forest habitat in the Prairie-to-Hardwood Transition region. While all BCA's are designated as Important Bird Areas by Iowa Audubon, this additional recognition is due to the presence of a large breeding population of rare Cerulean Warblers. The BCA is home to a variety of other forest birds, including Red-shouldered Hawks, Scarlet Tanagers, and Eastern Whip-poor-will. Every species of warbler regularly seen in Iowa can be spotted in the BCA, and some of Iowa's handful of nesting Peregrine Falcon pairs raise young on the cliffs overlooking the Mississippi River.

The Cerulean Warbler is a long-distance neotropical migrant that nests in large tracts of mature forest in the Eastern United States. Forest fragmentation and mountaintop mining has severely reduced the number of suitable nesting locations for this species, which was recently under consideration for listing under the Endangered Species Act. The threats on the nesting ground are coupled with destruction of wintering habitat in Central and South America, where the forests that have historically supported the bird are being logged and cut for coffee plantations.

Cerulean Warbler
Photo: Rondeau Provincial Park



Landform Regions of Iowa

The designation of the Effigy Mounds- Yellow River Bird Conservation Area as a Globally Important Bird Area will bring even more attention to the necessity of landscape-level conservation to reverse the decline of this unique species. Iowa Audubon and the Department of Natural Resources will hold a dedication ceremony to commemorate the new designation on Saturday, May 31st at the Yellow River State Forest headquarters west of Harper's Ferry in Allamakee County. Events include unveiling of new signage, speakers from multiple partner groups, and birding field trips, which may catch the spring warbler migration. For more information, including a schedule and directions, contact Iowa Audubon President Doug Harr at iowaaudubon@gmail.com.

- Julia Dale
AmeriCorps Member, WDP Assistant

A Big Thank-You From the Wildlife Diversity Program to those of you who donated to the Chickadee Check-off on your 2013 tax form!

DNR Teams with Zoo to Support Native Pollinators

Iowa's Blank Park Zoo is teaming up with 10 organizations, including the Iowa DNR, to introduce Plant.Grow.Fly., a conservation initiative to bring back native pollinators. This project encourages community members to plant pollinator habitat in yards, schools and businesses.

In addition to the DNR, this initiative is backed by several organizations including: Iowa State University's Reiman Gardens, Science Center of Iowa, Drake University, Polk County Conservation Board, Warren County Conservation Board, Madison County Conservation Board, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden and DMACC West Campus as well as a national program, Monarch Joint Venture.

"One-third of our global food supply depends on pollinators, and much of our world's biodiversity relies on the services they provide. Pollinators, like butterflies and bees, are declining at an alarming rate in our rapidly changing environment," said Jessie Lowry, Blank Park Zoo's Conservation Coordinator.

The Plant.Grow.Fly. project includes a gardening how-to guide that can be found at www.plantgrowfly.com. You can also register your pollinator friendly garden here, which will make you eligible for a yard sign that will proudly show your support for Iowa's native pollinators!

"Insects are an integral part of our environment, making more resources available will help to ensure the survival of these amazing animals," said Nathan Brockman, Butterfly Wing Curator at Reiman Gardens.

"Using region-specific garden recipes, you can plant the flowers and grasses that benefit our local species the most," said Lowry. "We believe that no effort is too small and that each of us can do our part to preserve the biodiversity around us - just by planning gardens in our yards."

- Stephanie Shepherd
WDP Biologist

Fun With Common Names: A Matching Game

Wildlife species the world over are often given colorful vernacular names by hunters and outdoors-persons. While vernacular names can vary quite a bit from region to region, sometimes there are more widely accepted common names which are more convenient to use than their formal scientific name. Here is a list of vernacular names occasionally used for Iowa wildlife, along with their more frequently used common names. See if you can match them up!

- Matt Stephenson
AmeriCorps Member
Iowa Wildlife Action Plan Assistant

(Answers on page 7)

1. Butcherbird ___
2. Thunder-pumper ___
3. Timberdoodle ___
4. Bullbat ___
5. Buffalo ___
6. Grinner ___
7. Cougar, Puma ___
8. Whistle Pig, groundhog ___
9. Mud Hen ___
10. Wood-pussy ___
11. Civet Cat ___
12. Wildcat ___
13. Flittermouse ___
14. Ermine ___
15. Yellowhammer ___
16. Rain Crow ___

A. Virginia Opossum
B. Northern Flicker
C. Woodchuck
D. Common Nighthawk
E. American Bittern
F. Short-tailed Weasel
G. Spotted Skunk
H. American Coot
I. Yellow-billed Cuckoo
J. Bobcat or Mountain Lion
K. Striped Skunk
L. American Woodcock
M. Loggerhead or Northern Shrike
N. Bat
O. Mountain Lion
P. American Bison

Native Bees Face Multiple Threats


Photo: Doug Harr

One of the most talked-about ecological catastrophes in recent years has been the mysterious and still largely unexplained Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), characterized by the sudden absence of worker honeybees and the resultant collapse of a hive or colony. While CCD has obvious and well-documented detrimental impacts on agriculture, the prominence of the phenomenon has perhaps overshadowed the perilous declines of native bees in recent years. According to the National Wildlife Federation, bees across the world are suffering population declines due to disease and habitat loss. There is widespread speculation that neonicotinoids, a new group of pesticides, may be contributing to the problem. These pervasive insecticides can be transferred from plants to the bees feeding on them through pollen and nectar, exposing bees to a potentially dangerous and persistent poison.

The European honeybee often receives credit for work done by native bees including bumblebees and solitary bees, which are among the most prolific pollinators in both native prairie and gardens. Iowa's two major agricultural crops, corn and soybeans, are self-pollinated and don't rely on bees. However, numerous smaller farming operations in the state rely on both native and introduced bees for pollination of crops like apples, pumpkins, onions, cabbage, and grapes. With CCD becoming more of a threat to mainstay pollinators across the country, gardeners and agricultural producers are starting to realize the economic value of native bees and, by extension, the need to protect them.

Some of the most familiar native bees include bumblebees and solitary bees. Bumblebees, members of the genus *Bombus*, can be recognized by their large, fuzzy bodies. This rather endearing appearance has made bumblebees the subject of countless children's books. Unlike most native bees, bumblebees are truly colonial and nest in hollow trees, clumps of grass, and often underground. The colony site is selected by a queen and remains active during the summer, with workers raising several generations of young bees. In the fall, new queens leave the colony and spend the winter in a sheltered location, often in an underground burrow. Come spring, the process repeats itself.

Solitary bees, while less well known than bumblebees, can be found in virtually any wild area as well as in town. These insects do not form colonies, instead laying eggs in nest-chambers they have built into bare wood, hollow grass or the ground. The eggs are provisioned with a store of nectar and pollen, and the nest is then sealed. Months later, adults emerge for their final, weeks-long life stage. Any gardener who has planted squash is familiar with aptly-named squash bees, which are a major provider of pollination services in gardens. Brilliant green, yellow and blue sweat bees are commonly observed on hot summer days gathering minerals from the skin of humans and other mammals.

Gardeners across the country are realizing how much they have to gain from promoting native bees. Whether your yard is full of vegetables, flowers, or native prairie, providing habitat for native bees can increase your horticultural success. Plant a variety of native perennials that will produce blooms throughout the summer, and use pesticides sparingly. Don't remove every bit of debris and leaf litter in your yard, as bees may nest in these sites. Avoid disturbing the soil during winter, as this may disturb current nests.


Photo: Bruce Ehresman

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/) provides valuable information on promoting native pollinators.

- Julia Dale
AmeriCorps Member, WDP Assistant

Passenger Pigeons– Lessons from Our Past

On March 6th, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University hosted a lecture by Dr. Stanley Temple, an Emeritus Professor of Conservation Biology with the University of Wisconsin, Madison and a Senior Fellow and Science Advisor with the Aldo Leopold Foundation. The lecture was entitled "The Extinction of the Passenger Pigeon, Lessons from the Past for a Sustainable Future" and was timed to mark the centennial of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon in 1914 when Martha, the last of her species, died at the Cincinnati Zoo. Temple used the case of the Passenger Pigeon to call attention to the world's ongoing extinction crisis and our relationship with other species.

Probably the most terrible example of mass slaughter in the history of wildlife was not that of the American Bison but that of the Passenger Pigeon. It is a story that almost defies belief: as recently as the 1880s, this bird was the most numerous vertebrate in North America and made up as much as 40 percent of the continent's avian population. Their migrating flocks extended up to a mile wide and 300 miles long. They were so dense that they could darken the sky for hours and then for days as the flock passed overhead. In 1860, a naturalist observed a single flock that he estimated to contain 3.7 billion Passenger Pigeons. By comparison, there are currently 260 million Rock Doves in existence today.

The birds were notoriously colonial, and one single Passenger Pigeon nesting area in Wisconsin once occupied an area as large as 850 square miles, roughly comparable to the 30 miles by 30 miles from Ames west to Ogden and north to Webster City. Nesting colonies attracted large numbers of predators, including American Minks, Weasels, and Raccoons that preyed on eggs and nestlings. Predatory birds, such as Owls, Hawks, Falcons, and Eagles preyed on nestlings and adults, and Wolves, Foxes, Bobcats, Bears, and Mountain Lions took injured adults and fallen nestlings It is believed that the large congregations of Passenger Pigeons were due to the anti-predator benefits of very large numbers. While many predators were drawn to the flocks and preyed upon individual pigeons, the flock itself was largely protected due to its sheer size.

The species' incredible abundance was also an enticement for over-exploitation and mass slaughter by humans. The birds were shot for their meat, which was sold by the ton, for their oil and feathers, and for sport. The flocks were so thickly packed that a single shot could bring down thirty or forty birds, and many were killed simply by hitting them with pieces of wood as they flew over hilltops. Passenger Pigeons were shot with such ease that many did not consider them to be a game bird, as an amateur shooters could easily bring down six with one shotgun blast; a particularly good shot with both barrels of a shotgun at a roost could kill over 60 birds.

By the mid-1800s, railroads had opened new opportunities for pigeon shooters. While previously it was impossible to ship masses of pigeons to Eastern cities, the access provided by the railroad permitted Pigeon hunting to commercialize. After the advent of the railroad, the town of Plattsburg, New York is estimated to have shipped 1.8 million Pigeons to larger cities in 1851 alone at a price of 31 to 56 cents a dozen. Large commission houses employed trappers to follow the flocks of pigeons year-round. In 1874, at least 600 individuals were employed as pigeon trappers, a number which grew to 1,200 by 1881. The market was so flooded with birds that by 1876 shipments of dead Pigeons were unable to recoup the costs of the barrels and ice needed to ship them, which led to the Pigeons being caught alive instead.

Some forward-thinking Americans did try to save the Passenger Pigeon. The Ohio State Legislature dismissed one such petition in 1857, saying that "the Passenger Pigeon needs no protection. Wonderfully prolific, having the vast forests of the North as its breeding grounds, traveling hundreds of miles in search of food, it is here today and elsewhere tomorrow, and no ordinary destruction can lessen them." The intense shooting pressure proved too much, and as the flocks dwindled in size, populations fell below the threshold necessary to propagate the species.

Continued on page 7

2014 MSIM Season Kicks Off

About a dozen new seasonal technicians for the Iowa Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring (MSIM) project spent the week of April 15th in training at the Boone Wildlife Research Station. The technicians learned to identify a variety of amphibians and reptiles, birds, butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies, and mammals. Despite some cold mornings, the group was able to practice essential survey techniques out in the field.

Iowa's MSIM project is run by Iowa State University in partnership with the DNR's Wildlife Diversity Program. The program began in 2006 and has surveyed more than 400 sites on public and private land. The massive amounts of data collected provide valuable baseline information regarding the state of Iowa's wildlife. Throughout the summer, technicians will monitor birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, mammals, dragonflies and damselflies, mussels and fish.

Learning to trap small mammals
Photo: Matt Stephenson

New MSIM techs practice birding
Photo: Matt Stephenson

This year, MSIM is focusing on a handful of sites that have been surveyed continuously since the program began. The four crews will be based out of locations across the state and will conduct surveys through the middle of October on public lands. Technicians gain valuable experience with numerous wildlife survey techniques, with the added bonus of getting to work in some of the most beautiful areas of the state.

- Julia Dale
AmeriCorps Member, WDP Assistant

Passenger Pigeons; Continued

Despite commercialized shooting, the rapid decline of the Passenger Pigeon— from approximately five billion to zero within a few decades — baffled most Americans. Science Magazine published an article claiming that the birds had all fled to the Arizona desert. Others hypothesized that the Pigeons had taken refuge in the Chilean pine forests, or somewhere east of Puget Sound, or in Australia. Another theory held that every Passenger Pigeon had joined a single megaflock and disappeared into the Bermuda Triangle. But in reality, Passenger Pigeons were gone.

Some have suggested cloning the Passenger Pigeon in the future. De-extinction efforts are now underway to revive the species by extracting DNA fragments from preserved specimens, and combining them with DNA from Band-tailed Pigeons, a similar species. Besides ethical and cost issues, a significant challenge to an effective de-extinction effort is the fact that the Passenger Pigeon was a very social bird known to form flocks of millions. When their numbers dwindled to a few thousand, the birds stopped breeding; it is likely that more than a few thousand birds – possibly tens of thousands- would have to be created in order for a de-extinction effort to be successful.

Perhaps the best lesson we can take from the story of the Passenger Pigeon can be summed up in this quote by naturalist Paul R. Ehrlich, who wrote that the extinction "Illustrates a very important principle of conservation biology: it is not always necessary to kill the last pair of a species to force it to extinction."

An audio recording of Dr. Temple's presentation can be enjoyed at http://khoifm.org/node/691

- Pat Schlarbaum
WDP Technician

Answers to game on page 4: 1M; 2E; 3L; 4D; 5P; 6A; 7O; 8C; 9H; 10K; 11G; 12J; 13N; 14F; 15B; 16I.

Injured Wildlife and Baby Birds – What You Can (and Should) Do

Our office often gets calls from the public asking about wildlife in trouble. While the DNR does not typically rescue or rehabilitate injured wildlife, we can answer some questions about wild animals who seem to be in need of help.

The most common calls are about baby animals. Licensed wildlife rehabilitators know how tough it is to raise these young animals, so first be certain that an animal needs assistance. Anyone who spends time outdoors will eventually stumble across a baby bird or other animal that appears helpless. In most cases, the parents have not abandoned their offspring and are waiting out of sight for the human to leave. It's often possible to reunite the young with their parents by placing the baby directly in the nest or den, or in a box close to where it was found. If a bird nest has been destroyed, an artificial nest can be created and placed near the original nest.

Young birds spend quite a bit of time hopping around awkwardly as they learn to fly. This behavior can make an observer think that the bird has a broken wing or has fallen out of the nest, but it is in fact a crucial step in development. If you find a baby bird in your yard and are afraid that it will be hurt, clear the area until the parents can return to their fledgling. Contrary to a popular myth, birds will not abandon their young if they detect human scent.

Both fawns and baby cottontails are left alone for most of the day and night, and are only fed two or three times during the day. A youngster alone doesn't always mean it is an orphan.

Occasionally, an animal may actually be sick or injured. We don't recommend trying to rescue wildlife yourself, especially those that appear ill. If you find an animal, first make sure it is actually in trouble. Looks for signs of injury or listlessness. Then contact your city or county animal control staff or local wildlife rehabilitator for advice. If you must intervene, keep the animal in a secure container lined with clothing and place it in a warm, dark, quiet place. Do not attempt to feed or water it. Injured wild animals in captivity may strike out from fear and pain. With few exceptions, all wildlife in Iowa are protected and federal and/or state permits are required to rehabilitate injured animals.

Iowa is lucky in that our state has a number of dedicated and enthusiastic private licensed wildlife rehabilitators. More often than not, these individuals work on their own time to rehabilitate and release animals, while receiving no public funding to help them. It is important not to overload these already busy individuals with animals which, like the fledglings discussed previously, are already being cared for by parents. When a more serious case presents itself, however, our wildlife rehabilitators are a valuable resource.

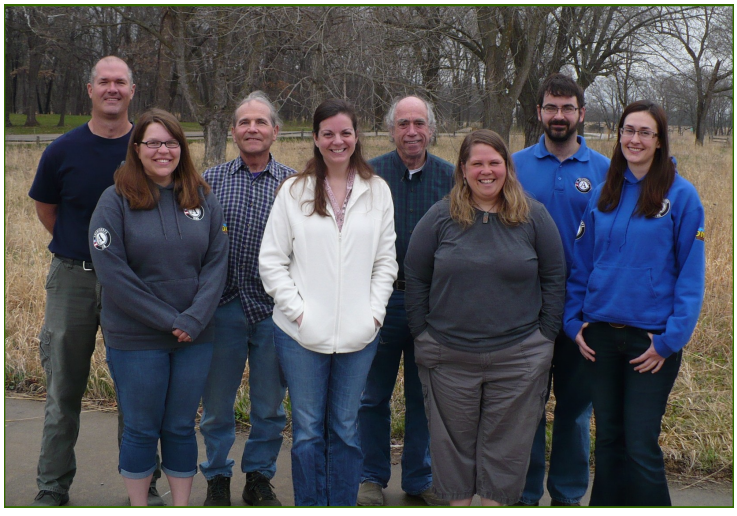
As always, prevention is key. Check your yard for hidden rabbit nests before you mow, or check that tree you want to cut down for animals and nests before starting your work. Handy flow charts can be found on the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association website: http://www.nwrawildlife.org/content/help-ive-found-animal. If the animal needs help, do not attempt to care for it yourself - call an experienced rehabilitator. The Iowa DNR has a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators at http://www.iowadnr.gov/portals/idnr/uploads/files/wildliferehab.pdf. Remember to thank the volunteer for the service they are providing Iowa's wildlife, and consider providing a donation to defray the cost of treatment.

- Julia Dale, AmeriCorps Member, WDP Assistant
& Marlene Ehresman, Executive Director, Iowa Wildlife Center

Meet the Wildlife Diversity Program!

The Wildlife Diversity Program has five full-time staff members who are assisted at the Boone Wildlife Research Station by four AmeriCorps members.

From Left to right: Paul Frese, Emily Kiefer (AmeriCorps), Bruce Ehresman, Karen Kinkead, Pat Schlarbaum, Stephanie Shepherd, Matt Stephenson (AmeriCorps), Julia Dale (AmeriCorps). Not pictured: Brent Rutter (AmeriCorps).



Species Spotlight—Grass Pickerel

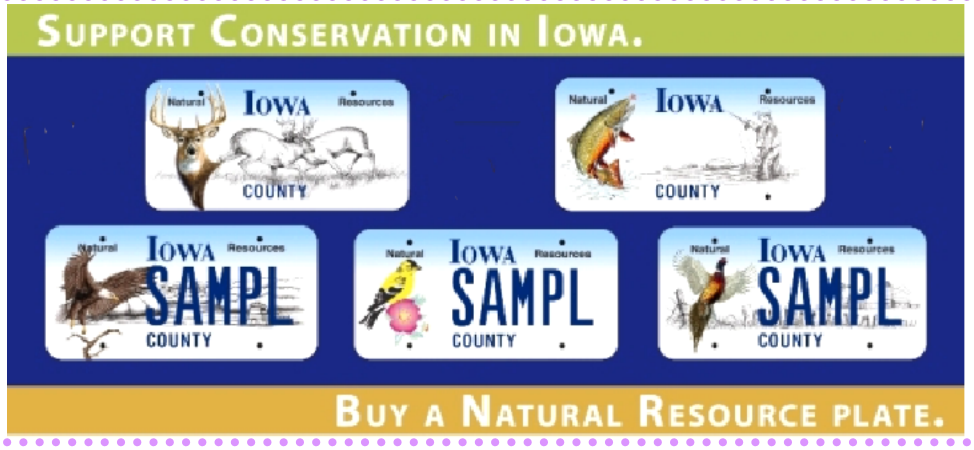
You know the scenario: a long, green-colored toothy fish lurks in the shadows of an aquatic weed bed. A small fish swims along, unaware of the danger present. Then, out of nowhere, WHAM! A shower of tiny silvery scales tells the tale. The small fish has disappeared and the larger fish has a full belly! Many a fisherman has hoped their lure was the small fish eaten by the bigger one, but in this case, the larger fish is an adult Grass Pickerel and wouldn't put up much of a fight! Grass Pickerel *(Esox americanus)* are the smallest member of the genus *Esox*, which ranges from the behemoth Muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*) and Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*) to the medium-sized Chain Pickerel (*Esox niger*) and the diminutive Grass Pickerel. Iowa is home to the Northern Pike, Muskellunge, and Grass Pickerel, where the first two species are prized game fishes and the last species is virtually unknown.

Grass Pickerel look like a miniature version of Northern Pike, but they have more vertical green striping and fully scaled opercles. In addition, they rarely grow larger than 10-12 inches long and have a dark bar or teardrop that runs below the eye and slants rearward. Grass Pickerel can be found from Wisconsin south to Texas east to Florida and north to Massachusetts in the appropriate habitat which usually consists of clear, weedy, slow-moving waters. There is an isolated population in the clear streams of the Sand Hills of Nebraska, but otherwise they tend to be a southeastern species. Grass Pickerel are a rare species in Iowa and are considered a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. They can be found in the Mississippi River backwaters and smaller tributaries, as well as on the lower Wapsipinicon, Cedar and Yellow Rivers. Although Grass Pickerel can be caught using rod and reel, most anglers pursue larger species in different habitat so incidental catches are rare. If captured, Grass Pickerel should be released unharmed as they are considered a Threatened Species on the Iowa Threatened and Endangered Species List.

Grass Pickerel are highly adapted to life lurking in the weedy shadows of shallow streams and oxbows, waiting to feed upon smaller fishes. Their cryptic coloration allows them to remain hidden before ambushing their prey. Grass Pickerel reproduce like most of their *Esox* cousins, by broadcasting eggs over submerged vegetation in the early spring. The tiny fry feed upon small aquatic invertebrates before they graduate to a mostly fish diet by the time they are 2-3 inches long. They grow rapidly and may achieve 5 inches by the end of their first year. Grass Pickerel are not a long lived species however, as four years old would be a ripe old age! Grass Pickerel were likely found throughout eastern Iowa prior to settlement, but have disappeared from former haunts due to degraded aquatic habitat caused by channelization, siltation, and modified hydrology. They still hang on in the pockets of suitable habitat that remain. If you catch a small pike that just doesn't seem quite right, take a closer look then release it unharmed, as you may have just caught a Grass Pickerel!

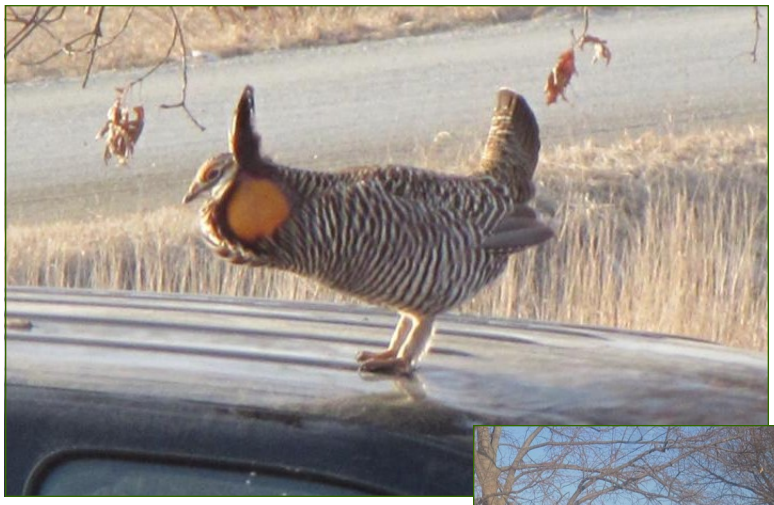
- Paul Frese

WDP Wildlife Technician



22% of the original purchase price and 60% of the renewal fee for natural resource license plates go directly to the Wildlife Diversity Program.

Last Look



A Ringgold County resident was surprised earlier this month when she found this male Greater Prairie-Chicken displaying on her pickup truck. While this species tends to use the highest point in a landscape as a lek (booming ground), vehicles are not usually their first choice. This individual was captured, banded, and released on an active lek site, where he was found again over a week later.

Photos courtesy of Donna Pedersen.

Upcoming Events

Falcon River Trip

Friday & Sat. May 2-3,
Harper's Ferry Community Center

View and learn about Iowa's Peregrine Falcons with a fish fry and river cruise! For more info and a detailed schedule contact
Pat Schlarbaum, 712-330-0526
pat.schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov

Iowa Ornithologist's Union Meeting

May 16-18
Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, Bellevue, NE
http://www.iowabirds.org/Meetings/NextMeeting.aspx

Global IBA Dedication

May 31
Stephens State Forest, Harper's Ferry, IA
See details on page 3

Loess Hills Prairie Seminar

May 30– Jun 1
Loess Hills WMA, Onawa, IA
http://www.nwaea.k12.ia.us/en/programs_and_servicesloess_hills_prairie_seminar/

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